

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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INFO USMISSION NATO

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 3873

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR NO US

SUBJECT: LABOR PARTY REACTION TO NOBEL AWARD

1. THE RESOLUTION ADOPTED WEDNESDAY EVENING BY THE LABOR PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM THE NOBEL COMMITTEE'S DECISION APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PRIMARILY A TACTICAL POLITICAL MANEUVER. HOWEVER, IT DOES REFLECT DEEP-SEATED FEELINGS WITHIN SEGMENTS OF THE LABOR PARTY AGAINST THE U.S.'S OVERALL VIETNAM POLICY.

2. ACCORDING TO DETAILED ACCOUNT IN DAILY DAGBLADET, AND PARTLY CONFIRMED IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH LABOR PARTY SECRETARY RONALD BYE, THE MOVEMENT WHICH EVENTUALLY RESULTED IN THE RESOLUTION, BEGAN EARLIER IN THE DAY WHEN LEFT-WING STORTINGSWOMAN LIV AASEN, REPRESENTING A NUMBER OF PROMINENT LABORITES, PROPOSED A PUBLIC SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN TO PROTEST THE PEACE PRIZE AWARD. (LIV AASEN ATTEMPTED TO NOMINATE SALVADOR ALLENDE FOR THE PEACE PRIZE IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS

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DEATH, BUT HER PROPOSAL WAS REJECTED BECAUSE NOMINATIONS

CANNOT BE MADE POSTHUMOUSLY.)

3. BEFORE GOING TOO FAR WITH HER PROPOSAL, HOWEVER, MS. AASEN DISCUSSED IT WITH LABOR'S PARLIAMENTARY LEADER ODDVER NORDLI, WHO, ACCORDING TO DAGBLADET, DECIDED TO PLACE IT ON THE AGENDA OF AN EVENING MEETING OF THE LABOR PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. FOLLOWING CONSIDERABLE DEBATE AT THE MEETING, DURING WHICH IT WAS NOTED THAT SOME PROMINENT PARTY LEADERS WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY OPPOSING THE NOBEL COMMITTEE DECISION, PARTY VICE CHAIRMAN REIULF STEEN SECURED AN AGREEMENT THAT THE QUESTION LAY IN THE DOMAIN OF THE PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE RATHER THAN THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. THEN, DAGBLADET SAID, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE EXCUSED ITSELF FOR A VERY SHORT MEETING AT WHICH IT ADOPTED A BRIEF RESOLUTION STATING (IN FULL): QUOTE THE LABOR PARTY WISHES TO DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM THE DECISION THE NOBEL COMMITTEE HAS TAKEN ON THE AWARD OF THE PEACE PRIZE FOR 1973. UNQUOTE.

4. PENDING FURTHER CLARIFICATION, WE ARE INCLINED TO VIEW STEEN'S ACTION AS A TACTICAL MANEUVER TO HEAD OFF THE PUBLIC SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN. THE LABOR PARTY IS KNOWN TO HAVE AN INTENSE DISLIKE FOR SUCH CAMPAIGNS, WHICH HAVE BEEN REACTIVE FOR THE PARTY IN THE PAST. HIS MOVE ALSO APPEARS TO REFLECT THE PARTY'S DELICATE POST-ELECTION POSITION, IN WHICH THE PARTY LEADERSHIP IS BEING BUFFETED FROM LEFT AND RIGHT. THE RESOLUTION, LACONIC AT BEST, APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN AN ATTEMPT TO SATISFY, OR AT LEAST DEFUSE, PARTY LEFTISTS WHO ARE OPPOSED TO THE NOBEL AWARD, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME NOT ANTAGONIZE THE PARTY'S RIGHT WING.

5. IN THE CONTEXT OF WIDE-SPREAD OPPOSITION IN NORWAY TO AMERICAN VIETNAM POLICY, THE RESOLUTION IS EXTREMELY MILD. IT IS RELEVANT THAT THE LABOR PARTY WAS IN NO WAY ASSOCIATED WITH THE NOBEL COMMITTEE DECISION IN THE FIRST PLACE. THE RESOLUTION, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN GREATLY MISINTERPRETED IN THE PRESS AS A STRONG CRITICISM OF THE NOBEL COMMITTEE DECISION.

6. THE RESOLUTION WAS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY, BUT WE ARE TOLD BY PARTY SECRETARY BYE THAT THE FIVE LABOR MINISTERS INCLUDING PRIME MINISTER BRATTELI, WHO ARE MEMBERS OR ALTERNATES ON THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CENTRAL COMMITTEE, WERE ABSENT. HE IMPLIED THAT SOME OF THEM MAY HAVE OPPOSED THE RESOLUTION.

7. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS KEPT INFORMED OF THE RESOLUTION BEFORE IT WAS ADOPTED, BUT THERE IS NO CLEAR INDICATION OF HOW HE PERSONALLY FEELS ABOUT THE NOBEL COMMITTEE DECISION. IN CONVERSATION WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY STOESSEL WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, BRATTELI ONLY NOTED THAT THERE HAS BEEN

VERY DIVIDED REACTION TO THE AWARD AND THAT IN HIS JUDGMENT, IT SHOULD BE AN INDEPENDENT DECISION SUBJECT TO NO OUTSIDE PRESSURES. THIS TOO IS CONSISTENT WITH THE WORDING OF THE RESOLUTION.

8. IN OTHER REACTION TO THE AWARD THURSDAY (OCT 18), TWO NOBEL PEACE PRIZE COMMITTEE MEMBERS SUBMITTED THEIR RESIGNATIONS TO THE STORTING. THE MEMBERS, HELGE ROGNLIEN (HEAD OF THE LIBERAL PARTY) AND EINAR HOVDHAUGEN (CENTER PARTY), REPORTEDLY VOTED AGAINST KISSINGER AND THO IN THE FINAL NOBEL COMMITTEE VOTE. ALSO, A REQUEST FOR EXTRAORDINARY STORTING DEBATE ON THE NOBEL AWARD AND ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE NOBEL COMMITTEE (WHICH IS APPOINTED BY THE STORTING) WAS MADE BY SOCIALIST ELECTION ALLIANCE LEADER BERIT AAS. STORTING PRESSIDENT GUTTORM HANSEN SAID HER PROPOSAL WOULD BE REFERRED TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE STORTING FOR CONSIDERATION.

9. GIVEN THE TRADITIONAL SANCTITY OF THE NOBEL COMMITTEE AND ITS AWARDS, OUR PROGNOSIS IS THAT THE INITIAL FLURRY WILL SUBSIDE. THE LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP PROBABLY HOPES THAT WITH THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE RESOLUTION, THE PARTY HAS WASHED ITS HANDS OF THE MATTER AND CAN WITHDRAW FROM THE DEBATE. THERE IS, HOWEVER, A DANGER THAT THE FAR-LEFT WILL USE THE OCCASION TO REOPEN DEBATE ON VIETNAM IN AN EFFORT TO STIR UP ANTI-AMERICANISM. BYRNE

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